Background

- Hair tourniquet syndrome occurs when one or more hairs become wrapped around a digit, and gradually constricts causing ischaemia.
- Finger involvement commonly occurs in children from 4 days of age to 19 months.
- Can also occur around the penis (usually 4 months to 6 years).
- Hair tourniquet syndrome occurs most commonly in babies and toddlers.
- Why the hair winds so tightly around the digit is unknown.

Assessment

The hair may escape detection as it can cut through the oedematous skin and the surrounding skin may re-epithelialise.

Treatment therefore begins with recognition of the condition and appreciation of the seriousness of the problem.

Extremely close examination may be needed to find the hair(s).

→ Use a magnifying glass and a bright light.

Management

Removal is indicated in all cases and should be implemented as early as possible. Adequately visualised constricting bands with little or no tissue oedema are good candidates for the unwrapping technique.

- Please discuss with the senior CED doctor / Nurse Practitioner.

Cases associated with mild to moderate oedema require blunt probe cutting technique.

In cases where other techniques have failed, when the swelling is so severe that the constricting band is not visible, refer to the paediatric surgical registrar for removal under general anaesthetic.